

# A Guide To Making Family Portraits That Touch The Heart

## Clothing, Color, Tone And Style...

Clothing and prop choices can make or break a portrait. It is very important to carefully plan your portrait session down to the last detail. When creating a portrait the objective is to draw attention to people's faces and their expressions. To do this effectively it is helpful the skin tones are the brightest or most intense areas of the portrait. When a medium to dark background is preferred, most people photograph best in medium to dark toned clothing, whatever their skin tone.

Clothing for small groups (two or three individuals) should be simple and in the same tonal ranges. When subjects' clothing is a mixture of light and dark tones it decreases the visual harmony - the light tone will dominate. It may also make the person dressed in the lighter tone appear heavier.

For family portraits it is very important to coordinate clothing. Tonal harmony is the most important goal. In a portrait, no one person should stand out visually. Proper clothing selection can make the difference between a portrait that appears to be a group of unrelated individuals, and one in which every member of the family appears to belong to the group.

To help you decide what clothing color to wear, first decide where you will hang your portrait. Look at the accent colors in the room. Do you like the way you look in one of those colors? If so consider wearing clothing in that color. The harmony between the colors of the portrait and the room will look pleasing and enhance the decor.

When thinking about the style of portraiture you would like for your portrait, consider the personalities of your family members and the furnishings in your home. If you are a casual family, a very formal traditional portrait may not be your style. Remember, you want this to be a memory of your family as it is today.

## **Additional Tips on Preparing For Your Portrait:**

- Turtle necks or v-necks are flattering provided that neither is exaggerated in style. Avoid very wide or particularly deep v-neck garments or bulky cowl neck sweaters that completely hide the neck.
- For close-up portraits, long sleeves are essential, as bare arms call attention to themselves and will overpower the face. Remember, no matter how slim your arms are, they may appear larger in a portrait.
- Women being photographed in full length should wear longer skirts, pants, or dark nylons in order to keep the eye from being directed toward the legs and away from the face.
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- Feet may show in the portrait, so be sure to wear socks and shoes that compliment the outfit you are wearing.
- Men should be clean-shaven or facial hair should be carefully groomed.
- Hair cuts should be planned about one week before the portrait session. Women should be photographed whenever they are happiest with their hair in relation to the time it is styled or cut.